TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

# CounterPunch

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## China's Google Headache

### By Peter Lee

The Google/China incident began as a fit of pique by Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

In December 2009, in the aftermath of what was apparently a particular egregious hack of computer systems at Google China – and over the objections of his business-minded CEO, Eric Schmidt – Brin decided to heed his long-suppressed qualms over operating within China's Internet censorship guidelines.

In January, Google threatened to stop filtering its search engine results. Hillary Clinton pitched in with some "Tear down this firewall" Internet-freedom grandstanding. The Chinese government, resentful at the public shaming and seeing no reason why Google – a solid number 2 in China's search engine markets – should be granted this special and dangerous boon, declined to consider Google's position.

Google was not in a particularly strong position, morally, commercially, or politically. It censors search engine results in other markets, such as India. It publicly – and rather arrogantly – demanded a major preferential concession from China as compensation for cybersnooping woes that the Chinese government declared it had nothing to do with. And Google happily gave the U.S. government another China-bashing tool at a sensitive time, when Beijing feels that the U.S.A. has a coordinated policy to isolate and roll back China.

The silence of Google's hi-tech peers such as Microsoft and Cisco on Google's public complaint was deafening. Google's strategy and even basic logic were questioned by academics and think-tankers. The only fellow traveler Google picked up in its exit from China was the boob-peddling web-hosting also-ran GoDaddy, which apparently decided to piggyback

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## *Stolen Computers, Witch Hunts, a Man Driven to his Death*

## Ultra-Zionism Runs Amok in Harper's Canada

### By Sarah Kamal

*"Prime Minister Harper has made it quite clear for some time now and has regularly stated that an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada."*

*– Peter Kent, junior minister of foreign affairs, Canada*

It has been a rude awakening. For years, Canadians have looked at the U.S.A. with a sense of smug superiority. Ours had been Canada the good: land of tolerance, universal healthcare, multiculturalism, and peacekeeping. But now, after four years of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's fanatic dogmatism, Canadians are facing the prospect of becoming more American than the Americans, with Harper's ideological attack dogs taking down long-standing liberal institutions, government policy exacerbating divisions along ethnic lines, and Israel's national interests apparently more important than those of the Canadian public. The recent scandal surrounding the Canadian human rights institution, Rights and Democracy (R&D), highlights Harper's underhanded tactics and contempt for pluralism, as well as his sedulous pandering to right-wing religious extremists.

Rights and Democracy was created by an act of Parliament in 1988 by the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. Its function was to promote rights defined in the U.N.'s International Bill of Human Rights internationally. Government-funded yet arm's-length, R&D was independent of partisan politics yet secure in its core financing. Mulroney appointed a social democrat who had been the leader of an opposing political party as its first president to establish R&D's nonpartisan identity. Succeeding Liberal and Conservative governments continued supporting the institution and maintained a tradition of appointing presidents of diverse background, in unanimity with the opposition parties, to head R&D.

Canada's foreign policy was uncontentious for the most part, with Canada maintaining evenhandedness and a somewhat self-aggrandizing perception of its role in peacekeeping. Harper broke sharply with this tradition. Before gaining power, Harper argued successfully for the unification of the two right-wing parties in Canada, the Progressive Conservatives and Canadian Alliance (which he led), to fight the "system of moral relativism, moral neutrality and moral equivalency" of the left. He trolled for issues that would unite social conservatives across denominations and faiths to create a "coalition of the willing." Foreign policy in particular needed what Harper, parroting U.S. neocons, termed "moral insights on right and wrong."

Elected prime minister in 2006, Harper embarked on a policy of rabid support for Israel, notoriously calling Israel's bombing of Lebanon a "measured" response to Hezbollah's holding two Israeli soldiers, and siding with the U.S.A. in rejecting calls for deploying an international peacekeeping force during the crisis. His was also the first government, before even that of Israel or the United States, to announce that it would not participate in the Durban Review Conference (or, U.N. World

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Conference Against Racism) in Geneva in 2009, claiming that the conference would promote anti-Semitism. His Israel-at-all-costs policy won Harper plaudits from predictable quarters, including the first International Leadership Award from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in December 2008, and the Presidential Gold Medallion for Humanitarianism from B'nai Brith International in June 2008.

This year, along with the G8 and G20 meetings, Canada is hosting the second meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA), which "brings together Parliamentarians from around the world to lead the fight against resurgent global anti-Semitism." The ICCA, which held its inaugural meeting in London in 2009, boasted a delegation of 11 Canadian parliamentarians who, upon return to Canada, set up the Canadian Parliamentary Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism (CPCCA). The CPCCA announced itself ready to receive reports on anti-Semitism in 2009.

In 2009, NGO Monitor, a group based in Jerusalem whose proclaimed objective "is to end the practice used by certain self-declared 'humanitarian NGOs' of exploiting the label 'universal human rights values' to promote politically and ideologically motivated anti-Israel agendas," submitted a carefully targeted report on Canadian NGOs. NGO Monitor described Alternatives, an international solidarity and development nongovernmental organization, as intensely hostile to Israel. Four months later, Alternatives announced that its funding from the Canadian government for programming in Haiti, Iraq, Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, and Central America was no longer certain. At this point, Alternatives has still not received any funding.

In the same report, NGO Monitor also blacklisted the Canadian Arab Federation, an organization mandated to pursue Canadian Arab interests. The Federation had its funding for language classes cut by the minister of citizenship and immigration, Jason Kenney, because of what Kenney charged were its anti-Semitic views. A third NGO in the NGO Monitor's report, Palestine House Educational, reported that a Canadian journalist had threatened to take information about them to minister Kenney. The potential for McCarthyism in Harper's vision for Canada is all too evident.

**The evaluation was vindictive and the charges baseless, including spurious accusations of Beauregard sponsoring terrorism.**

Perhaps the most high-profile Israel policy-related funding cut, however, was suffered by KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. KAIROS, a multidenominational Christian aid organization working for social justice, represents the seven largest church denominations in Canada. It had $7 million [all sums in Canadian dollars] – approximately half of its budget – cut in November 2009, severing a 35-year funding relationship with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The minister of International Cooperation, Bev Oda, said KAIROS' funding was not renewed because its programming did not fit with CIDA's priorities. Then, on December 16, 2009, minister Kenney told an audience at the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism that KAIROS was defunded for "taking a leadership role" in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign. KAIROS responded by pointing to its 2007 board of directors' decision against "advocating sanctions against Israel or a boycott of products from Israel." KAIROS also said that the word KAIROS in Greek means God's time, and that a document by Palestinian church leaders named "Kairos Palestine, 2009: A Moment of Truth" that called for a boycott of Israeli goods was unrelated to KAIROS Canada.

While not originally on the NGO Monitor's list, KAIROS did face allegations by Gerald Steinberg, the president of NGO Monitor, that KAIROS funded anti-Israeli political initiatives at the expense of health clinics and the welfare of the poor. Mary Corkery, the executive director of KAIROS, responded that KAIROS had built a health clinic in Gaza, but the Israel Defense Force bombed and destroyed it completely in 2009.

Rights and Democracy's difficulties were dramatically different. As a federal institution reporting to Parliament, drastic changes to its funding would have involved parliamentary debate, undoubtedly something Harper preferred to avoid. Instead, Rights and Democracy was destroyed through the government giving pro-Israel ideologues unchecked power over the institution.

Rémy Beauregard, a veteran human rights advocate, was president of Rights and Democracy when R&D made three grants totaling $30,000 to Al Haq, Al Mezan, and B'Tselem, NGOs based in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel respectively, to investigate human rights violations during Israel's 2008/2009 invasion of the Gaza Strip. The grants were one-off "urgent action" funds outside of R&D's ongoing programming and represented 0.27 per cent of R&D's $11 million budget. A conservative appointee himself, Beauregard made sure that the grants were approved by the minister of foreign affairs, then signed off on them.

Enter Aurel Braun. On March 5, 2009, the Harper government appointed Braun, a professor at the University of Toronto, to be chair of R&D's board of directors. Braun, a hawkish political science professor and former board member for B'nai Brith, a Jewish advocacy organization, took immediate umbrage with the grants. Board meetings became combative, and the new chair and his allies, who consti-

**CounterPunch**

EDITORS
**Alexander Cockburn**
**Jeffrey St. Clair**

ASSISTANT EDITOR
**Alevtina Rea**

BUSINESS
**Becky Grant**
**Deva Wheeler**

DESIGN
**Tiffany Wardle**

COUNSELOR
**Ben Sonnenberg**

CounterPunch
PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558
1-800-840-3683
counterpunch@counterpunch.org
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tuted a minority on the board, demanded information continuously. The costs associated with the board more than doubled in the new fiscal year because of the enormous dossier of documentation that Braun ordered. Braun and his allies also insisted on direct, unaccompanied access to the nonmanagerial staff at R&D, a request Beauregard vigorously denied as inappropriate. The times that the board did engage with staff, they asked personal questions including ethnic profile, Arabic language skills, and the number of Jewish employees at the organization.

In March, after the chair had expressed grave concerns, Beauregard and his senior management made it clear that R&D did not intend to continue with programming related to the Gaza grants. Braun was unwilling to let the issue of the three grants drop. The majority of the board gave president Beauregard a glowing evaluation, but Braun instructed the secretary to not record those proceedings. Instead, a three-person subcommittee was convened under his leadership that wrote and sent a secret evaluation to the Privy Council (a federal executive agency responsible for all other government agencies and departments) against the wishes of the majority of the board. Braun then spent over $10,000 without board approval to obtain a legal opinion to prevent the president and the rest of the board from seeing the evaluation. Beauregard did eventually obtain access to the evaluation, months later through the Freedom of Information Act, confirming his worst fears. The evaluation was vindictive and the charges baseless, including spurious accusations of his sponsoring terrorism, meeting with Hezbollah and Hamas, and not respecting the authority of the board chairman.

The board voted in June to revise the evaluation as deemed necessary at their next meeting. The next meeting in October was canceled at the last moment by the chair. By the time the board reconvened in January 2010, the Harper government had recalled a board member who had tended to vote with Beauregard and added two more pro-Israel zealots. Braun now held a majority by one. Every decision in the vitriolic January meeting was won by Braun's new majority, including refusal to renew the mandate of an international board member supportive to Beauregard. Two longstanding board members who were sympathetic to Beauregard, including the esteemed Sima Samar, head of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, resigned and walked out in disgust. (Simar had been former deputy president of Afghanistan in Hamid Karzai's 2001 interim government.) Yet again, the three $10,000 grants were brought up, this time for a vote of "repudiation" as the funds had already been dispensed. Beauregard gave in and voted with Braun. He died of heart failure that night.

With Beauregard's death, the struggle at Rights and Democracy, a relatively obscure institution in Canada, became front-page news. In an unprecedented move, all but two of the 47 R&D staff signed a letter expressing nonconfidence and demanding the resignation of Braun and two other board members. Beauregard's widow said that harassment by certain R&D board members had contributed to her husband's death. A chorus of protest from prior presidents of Rights and Democracy, opposition parties, Beauregard's family, international human rights organizations, and legal experts demanded an independent inquiry and a reassessment of the board.

**While staff were attending Beauregard's funeral, there was a break-in at the R&D office.**

Coverage only intensified as the board attempted to seize control of the situation. At a board meeting convened shortly before Beauregard's funeral, the board appointed Jacques Gauthier, one of the board members whose resignation the staff had demanded, as interim president. Gauthier, a Toronto lawyer, had written a doctoral thesis arguing that East Jerusalem, considered occupied under international law, belongs to Jews. Within 24 hours of taking office, he had suspended the three senior managers and sent a bailiff to confiscate their laptops, mobiles, and office entry cards on the justification of "investigation." He then slapped a gag order on remaining staff and used R&D funds without public tender or a disclosed role to hire a private communications company, a forensic auditing team, and private investigators. Staff in some cases were introduced to a private investigator without being told of his occupation, only later discovering his identity through an Internet search.

A break-in at the R&D office on the day that staff were attending Beauregard's funeral, with two laptops stolen – including that of a member of the communications team – added to the speculation. A month later, the three suspended managers were fired for insubordination and a high-profile constitutional lawyer confirmed that he would represent them in court action. That night, the Harper government announced the appointment of Gérard Latulippe, a man whose nomination had already been rejected by all three opposition parties on the grounds that he had declared Muslim immigration a threat to society, as new president of R&D.

Meanwhile, a public battle was being waged in op-ed pages and blogs, leaked documents and press releases. The seven-member board majority (the two remaining board members opting out) released collective letters presenting their actions as stemming from concern for accountability and due process. Their actions, they wrote, had nothing whatsoever to do with the Middle East. R&D staff, on the other hand, remained under gag order and were unable to respond. The op-ed battles seemed to reach its climax with the publication of a letter by Sima Samar, the board member who had resigned on the day of Beauregard's death. As an internationally renowned figure and someone privy to the details that had previously been the privileged domain of the Braun faction, Samar's public revelations were important and credible. She expressed "distress" over the "baseless" accusations by the board against Beauregard and his staff, the "harassment" of the late president before his death, and the continued sullying of his reputation after his death. Soon after, the Québec Assembly (the provincial legislative body) voted unanimously to recognize the excellence of R&D's record and called for the preservation of its independence. The opposition also successfully pushed through a vote for Parliamentary hearings to begin.

Political analysts, including career conservatives, have tried to decipher the meaning behind Harper's deliriously pro-Israel stance. Canada has few electoral districts with a significant proportion of Jewish voters, and Canadian campaign



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finance limits reduce the significance of campaign contributions by special interest groups. The clearest signals come from Harper's own writings and circumstances as the leader of a recently unified party that needs to find policies that resonate among disparate strands of conservatism. Support for Israel allows Harper to strut the world stage as a Can-Do leader in the Great War on Terrorism (without needing to concern Canada's limited military, still mired in Afghanistan), acting in concert with international allies to promote conservative values, as well as galvanizing an activist base among Christian and Jewish constituencies, especially the evangelicals considered to be a significant portion of his constituents.

Around 2003, the more extreme right-wing Christian and Jewish communities in Canada entered into an alliance. B'nai Brith Canada, an organization promoting Israeli settlements and aspiring to be Canadian version of the Anti-Defamation League, decided to ally itself with Canada Christian College, an evangelical college run by Reverend Charles McVety, one of Canada's most famous dispensationalists (also known as Christian Zionists). McVety was present at the founding of John Hagee's Christians United for Israel, itself established in 2006 with the support of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson in the United States. He then became the national co-chair for Christians United For Israel Canada. McVety became a frequent speaker at B'nai Brith Canada functions, and his dispensationalist interest in fighting to maintain and expand settlements – to allow for the ingathering of all Jews in all of ancient Israel before the return of the Messiah – was clearly in line with B'nai Brith's concerns. B'nai Brith and McVety and his associates enjoyed a close relationship with Harper from the outset of his rule, with McVety described as having the "ear of the conservatives" and B'nai Brith functions boasting Stephen Harper's presence.

Rights and Democracy had long been out of favor, if not actively disliked by the ultra-Zionist community. In January 2010, David Matas, a board member in the 7-person faction opposing late R&D president Beauregard and a longstanding legal counsel to B'nai Brith (he has since been involved in efforts to condemn the Goldstone Report on war crimes during the Gaza invasion), wrote an analysis of the R&D conflict. He said that R&D had previously had a Middle East program, "corrupted by an anti-Zionist agenda," which was terminated in 1998, one year into his earlier 1997-2003 term on the board. Despite this, in April 2002, the R&D president at the time, Warren Allmand, wrote two letters to the minister of foreign affairs, one expressing concern that Canada voted against a resolution at the U.N. Human Rights Commission that was critical of Israeli behavior, the other, as Matas put it, "an anti-Israel diatribe full of the usual blather." Under the next president, Jean Louis Roy, R&D made grants to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, the International Women's House in the West Bank, and the St. Ives Society legal aid for Palestinians program. According to Matas, the grants were made using discretionary funds in order to bypass the board, and were part of a "historically entrenched pattern of behavior."

These grants attracted the attention of the NGO Monitor, which published a report on R&D (then called the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development) in 2003, claiming that "in practice ICHRDD uses millions of dollars of public Canadian funds to further a strong anti-Israel agenda" – a patently incorrect claim, as the discretionary fund only allows for grants of up to $60,000. What is striking about both of these interventions, however, is the care with which the NGO Monitor and Matas were following developments at R&D, with Matas' monitoring continuing until 2007, long after the end of his mandate on the board.

**Support for Israel allows Harper to strut the world stage as a Can-Do leader in the Great War on Terrorism.**

Harper may well have focused Rights & Democracy as a target of opportunity, in his political posturings against the "moral relativism" of the left. Certainly, an undercurrent in R&D-Harper relations since 2007 included an awareness on the part of R&D that their institution was out of favor. Harper has wanted to develop an institution in Canada that would parallel the U.S. National Democratic Institute and International Republic Institute – in other words, allow for taxpayer-funded interventions affiliated with party politics of the crudest sort.

The Conservatives commissioned an advisory report that culminated in a November 2009 blueprint for developing the Canadian Centre for Advancing Democracy, a federal agency seeking to build political parties to its liking in the developing world. The blueprint suggests an institutional structure somewhat similar to that of R&D, with offices in Haiti and Afghanistan, where R&D already had long-time field offices. It was to have an annual budget of $30 to $70 million, dwarfing R&D's annual $11 million – in a time of budgetary restraint. Two can also be a crowd.

R&D did try to move in the direction Harper envisioned, even creating a Democratic Development Program and implementing numerous changes in planning, programming, and staff relations. Beauregard was, in fact, instrumental in leading the institution out of period of decline and difficulty, and had been awaiting policy direction from the board for the future. It was not forthcoming. The five board appointees in 2009 who precipitated the R&D crisis were drawn from a very specific ultra-Zionist demographic, and proved to be hostile and suspicious of the very nature of the institution.

Parliamentary hearings into the crisis at R&D started in March. The government, for all its desire to portray the issue as an internal conflict unrelated to them, faces a difficult time eschewing its responsibility for the disaster. Whatever Harper's motives, time will likely categorize R&D as an example of loss of control over his Israel policy. Time will also likely show Harper on the wrong side of the Canadian public, who value both Canada's traditional role as peacekeeper and identity distinct from the United States. Further, Harper will be on the wrong side of history. As the Goldstone Report and world public opinion implicate Israel's brutal occupation more and more, Harper's exultant support of Israel will be impossible to forgive. **CP**

**Sarah Kamal** is a Trudeau Scholar at the London School of Economics. She formerly worked as Project Coordinator, Women's Rights in Afghanistan, at Rights and Democracy. She can be reached at sarah.kamal@gmail.com.



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## *Tortured Nature*

# The Rise and Rise of Gulag-Ag

### By Steven Higgs

For David Kirby, it's not too much of a stretch to argue that candidate Barack Obama's position on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) helped elect him president.

Iowa has one of the worst factory farm records in the nation, says Kirby, author of the new book, *Animal Factory: The Looming Threat of Industrial Pig, Dairy, and Poultry Farms to Humans and the Environment*, from St. Martin's Press. Hillary Clinton's stand on CAFOs wasn't nearly strong enough to satisfy Iowa Democrats. And by the time they cast their caucus votes on Jan. 3, 2008, John Edwards, even though he was very good on the issue, had overstayed his welcome.

"There was some Edwards fatigue there at the end, and those voters had to go somewhere," Kirby said when I interviewed him recently in his Brooklyn home. "And when they weighed Hillary and Barack, they went with Obama at the last minute. I think the rural voters did so because he was very strong on regulating CAFOs and made a lot of promises that haven't been fulfilled yet."

Kirby is a former aide to New York Mayor David Dinkins and a former *New York Times* reporter, who published *Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic: A Medical Controversy* in 2005. The California native and UC-Berkeley graduate spent three years researching *Animal Factory*. He visited 18 states, from the Neuse River watershed in rural southeastern North Carolina to the Yakima Valley in Washington State. And not only did he get an earful from those who, like thousands of Iowa Caucus voters, are neighbors to factory farms, he also got a nose full, many times over.

"My nose and throat would be coated with crap, literally," Kirby remembers. "I even remember coming home and opening my suitcases and just getting a whiff of that cow smell. The pigs smell the worst, but the cows make you sicker."

*Animal Factory* was inspired by citizens who share their land, water and air with factory farms. "It is told from the point of view of people who live in rural environments, largely conservative, bedrock Americans, Republicans." They are, for the most part, family farmers who lived quiet, normal lives until their communities were invaded by CAFOs that bred or raised "hundreds if not thousands of animals nearby, on land that's barely large enough to support a few animals."

His subjects are citizens who refused to accept the changing status quo. "These people had enough. They'd had enough of the stink, they'd had enough of the flies, of the water contamination. They were very concerned about the impact these facilities were having on their local communities. They were displacing small family farms. They were not particularly contributing to the local economy. And they were coming at a very, very fast pace."

**"My nose and throat would be coated with crap, literally," Kirby remembers. "I even remember coming home and opening my suitcases and just getting a whiff of that cow smell. The pigs smell the worst, but the cows make you sicker."**

In most instances, the C in CAFO means "concentrated," but it can also stand for "confined," as in Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs). Regardless what the letters stand for, the meaning is the same: the concentration and confinement of huge numbers of hogs, cows, chickens and turkeys in places where sustainable agriculture had served both farmers and society for centuries.

"Many in the [Yakima] Valley had watched with heavy hearts as family dairies of 75 cows or so went out of business, replaced by enormous, corporate-backed behemoths that could milk and feed 5,000 or more cows within a single confinement," Kirby writes in *Animal Factory*.

Indiana is another state Kirby highlights in the book. "I spent a lot of time in Indiana, I went there several times, I went everywhere," he said, punctuating the last point with a long laugh, "just about everywhere." Hoosier law defines CFO as "any animal feeding operation engaged in the confined feeding of at least 300 cattle, or 600 swine or sheep, or 30,000 fowl, such as chickens, turkeys or other poultry," according to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. There is no maximum.

CAFO or CFO, the concentration of so many animals and so much waste presents serious threats to the environment and human health. The animals generate far more urine and feces than the land can absorb. And the farm owners store it in giant waste lagoons that rupture, leak, overtop and spill into creeks and rivers, causing algae blooms and fish kills.

Karen Hudson from West Central Illinois is one of the *Animal Factory* profiles. She lived with large swine facilities and a dairy in her hometown of Elmwood, which had the largest lagoon breach in state history. It spilled "millions and millions" of gallons of waste into a creek that feeds into the Peoria River, which feeds into the Mississippi River, which feeds into the Gulf of Mexico, which is home to the largest dead zone in the world.

During his time in the Yakima Valley, the Central Valley of California and, to a lesser extent, in Texas, Kirby experienced "brown fogs" that made him physically ill. It gets so bad at times that motorists have to turn on their headlights in the middle of the day. "You are inhaling dangerous gases that escape from the lagoons, that escape from these barns with their giant fans that push this stuff out."

Yakima's Helen Reddout, whom Kirby describes as a "full-fledged warrior activist," is another of the trio of citizen activists he builds *Animal Factory* around. And the stuff she has been exposed to by living in the midst of CAFOs is dangerous indeed. It can include live viruses and bacteria, he said, as well as particulate matter, animal protein, dander, feces and mold. They also spray the insides with pesticides and insecticides. "All of that stuff gets blown out."

Amid the fugitive pollutants is ammonia, which is dangerous to the eyes, the



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nose and throat. "It will carry long distances," Kirby said. "We've seen ammonia mist, it's kind of like an acid rain that can hurt forests. It deposits in the water and converts into nitrates and nitrogen and can cause algae blooms, which kill fish." Hydrogen sulfide, the smell of rotten eggs, doesn't make people crazy just because it smells bad. "It can cause depression, violent behavior, neuro-developmental disorders."

Methane has accumulated under the synthetic liner in one lagoon in East Central Indiana and forced a 30-foot-high bubble above the surface. "I don't know what the status is right now, but a few weeks ago they were very worried that this could just explode and be a huge disaster," Kirby said. Today, neighbors report that there are 17 such places where the liner has pushed through 14 feet of manure. And methane can be deadly. "People die near lagoons sometimes, when they get too close, they breathe in the methane, and they pass out, and they die." Living in the crowded, isolated confines of a CAFO also makes the animals more susceptible to disease, Kirby continued, which requires the use of antibiotics "to keep the animals alive and keep them thriving." That can lead to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

And then there are the viral mutations. "It's very, very likely this is where the swine flu epidemic came from," Kirby points out, "from a large-scale facility."

Manure, of course, has always been part and parcel of the farming industry. But, typically speaking, sustainable farms have always had enough animals per acre to live in harmony with the land. They nourish the pastures that nourish them. "You have a wonderful closed system. You have enough land that can absorb the waste and then take that waste and turn it back into nutrients to feed the animals."

But, by design, CAFO systems force the land to carry more animals than it can support. "There's not enough land to absorb all the nutrients produced in that waste. So, you have to either overapply it, or you have to make arrangements to send it offsite." It also means that nutrients must be imported to feed the animals, which means burning fossil fuels, which means more atmospheric pollution.

Retired Marine J.A.G. Rick Dove is the third *Animal Factory* profile. He lives in North Carolina, where they grow some corn but not nearly enough to feed all the pigs. Everyday they bring in trainloads of grain, he told Kirby, and nearly all of those nutrients, all of the phosphorus and nitrogen, stay in North Carolina in one form or another.

"Most of it stays behind in the form of the manure, and every year you're just bringing in far more nutrients than you're exporting," Kirby said, "and you end up with oversaturation."

The economics of CAFOs are almost as threatening as the environmental and health impacts. From the moment an animal is conceived to the time it ends up on a plate or packaged in the supermarket, large companies control the entire process. "They perpetuate a corporate food system where a very small number of companies control a very large part of what we eat," Kirby said of CAFOs, "from semen to cellophane, as they say."

**"People die near lagoons sometimes, when they get too close, they breathe in the methane, and they pass out, and they die."**

That vertically integrated, corporate concentration reduces competition by eliminating market access for smaller producers and any opportunity for them to have their products sold in the supermarket. "Yeah, we get food that's pretty cheap. We have the cheapest food in history. But we're paying for it in other ways." Hundreds of millions of fish in the Neuse (pronounced "noose") River that flows through Rick Dove's hometown of New Bern, N.C., paid one price. The berg of 23,000-plus today was the site in 1991 of one of the worst fish kills in state history.

"Rick and his neighbors woke up one morning to the stench of hundreds of millions of dead menhaden lining the banks for miles," Kirby writes in *Animal Factory*. "In the following days, bass, striper, mullet, crab and shrimp also turned up dead. They were all pocked with round, red sores, as though some specter had sucked the lifeblood from their flesh."

It would take two years of environmental detective work by Dove before the source of the '91 New Bern fish kill was identified: a microscopic organism called *Pfiesteria*, which kills fish, leaves marks, and is nourished by nutrients found in pig poop. New Bern was downstream from one of the heaviest concentration of CAFOs in the nation.

To address the water quality issues, the state in 1997 imposed a moratorium on construction of new CAFOs with lagoons. The goal was to steer the industry away from the lagoon system and invest in new technologies. The law was renewed in 2003.

At the last minute, however, some mainstream environmental groups negotiated a deal in Raleigh that said, if an existing lagoon is in imminent danger of rupturing, the CAFO could get a permit to build a new lagoon. Lagoons typically last about 20 years, so most of them in North Carolina are 20 years old or less and are approaching the end of their lifetimes.

"Guess what, they're going to start rupturing," Kirby said. "So, this provision is very worrisome for environmentalists down there. Activists, they feel like they got sold out, that this emergency-replacement provision is just going to perpetuate the lagoon system indefinitely for the future."

Robert Kennedy Jr. and the WaterKeepers sued over the North Carolina CAFOs and reached an agreement with Smithfield Farms and some other large producers that required them to identify and switch to alternative technologies. But while they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and identified five promising alternatives, none met a per-pound, per-pig cost that the agreement also required.

"Basically, as some of the environmentalists had predicted and worried, it let Smithfield of the hook," Kirby said. "They said, 'Look, we tried to develop the technology. We found some good stuff, but it would cut into our profits too much. If we had to implement this, it would make our products cost more, and then we would no longer be competitive with pigs grown in other states or grown in other countries.' So, it didn't happen."

As he prepared to go out and talk about *Animal Factory* and CAFOs, Kirby has increasingly turned his attention to solutions. "What tools are there, really, what could be done to level the playing



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field so that smaller producers, independent producers, could have more fair competition with the big companies, more access to the marketplace?" he said. "And what could be done to try to reduce the spread of CAFOs if people are opposed to them?"

With respect to slowing their spread, just about everywhere Kirby went he heard calls for local control over CAFO permitting. Communities usually can decide if giant, polluting industries move into their jurisdictions. But because CAFOs are agricultural, they are exempt from a lot of these regulatory remedies.

"Counties simply don't have say over whether these things can be built or not. They can prescribe certain building codes, they can do that, but they can't just refuse a permit to a CAFO just because they want to." The problem, of course, is that neighboring counties could permit CAFOs right across the county line, but I think local control would go a long way."

The marketplace is beholden to corporate-controlled processing plants that run 24 hours a day and produce uniform products. So, they contract out with the really, really big producers. "It's much easier to buy a thousand pigs from one grower than a hundred pigs from 10 different growers, with 10 different types of pigs … These factories are calibrated to slaughter and process certain size pigs, chickens, eggs, etc. So they want uniformity, they want large amounts that they can buy all at once, very cheap."

This "vertical integration" tends to shut out the small, independent farmers, who have nowhere else to go. They can raise animals, but, if they can't get them slaughtered or the meat-processed, packaged, distributed and sold, the animals are worthless. That is what has forced a lot of people out of the business."

Kirby ends *Animal Factory* with the Obama administration which owes the farm families that helped him get elected. The record is not particularly encouraging so far. On the plus side, the Justice and Agriculture departments will hold workshops early this year on anticompetitive measures. Breaking up the vertical integration monopolies is essential, Kirby said. There is the positive symbolism of Michele Obama's organic garden. But Obama's appointment of former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack as secretary of agriculture and his tenure thus far don't bode well for those family farmers in Iowa whose votes were so critical in the Iowa caucuses.

"Vilsack remained largely above the fray of ongoing feuds over the placement of confined animal feeding operations near rural communities," the *Iowa Independent* reported when Obama announced his appointment in December 2008. "Groups on the left who would like to give local communities stricter control over where the CAFOs are allowed felt betrayed by their governor's unwillingness to help, but his stance kept agribusiness interests relatively quiet."

Ronnie Cummins, executive director of the Organic Consumers Association, put it more bluntly in a column at the same time: "While Vilsack has worked to restrain livestock monopolies, his overall record is one of aiding and abetting Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations." His nomination, he said, "sent a chill through the sustainable food and farming community who have been lobbying for a champion in the new administration."

**It would take two years of environmental detective work by Dove before the source of the '91 New Bern fish kill was identified: a microscopic organism called *Pfiesteria*, which kills fish, leaves marks, and is nourished by nutrients found in pig poop.**

Writing about the swine flu last June, *Grist* Food Editor Tom Philpott wrote of Secretary Vilsack: "In a Congressional hearing last month, he cravenly defended the safety of industrial meat production – even though U.S. regulatory agencies have no mechanism in place to test the U.S. herd for H1N1."

**CP**

**Steven Higgs** is a Bloomington, Ind.-based freelance writer, who publishes *The Bloomington Alternative* and writes the "Autism and the Indiana Environment Blog." He can be reached at editor@BloomingtonAlternative.com.

**LEE** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

on the issue for some desperately needed publicity.

Now, after three months of less-than-edifying handwringing over its shattered prospects for ad sales and phone-based browsing in China (the means, by which the advantages of the glorious search engine are monetized), Google has decided to openly defy the PRC government by forwarding in-China search queries to Google Hong Kong for unfiltered results (banned results are still blocked on the inbound return by China's Great Firewall).

In the eyes of the PRC, the dispute has acquired an overt political dimension. To China's detriment – and Google's benefit – it appears that the knuckleheads inside the Chinese Communist Party won the contest to try to manage the Google news cycle.

On March 26, the major U.S. news outlets published a translation of an internal Chinese government document, leaked to the UC-Berkeley-based news aggregator *China Digital Times* that described the news management agenda in the wake of Google's decision. The key


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element in the Chinese framing is the statement, "Netizen discussions on this matter are not limited to the commercial sphere."

In other words, it has been determined that the discussions are veering into the political realm. Defining the boundaries and content of acceptable political debate is the declared monopoly of the Chinese Communist Party, and that gives the information management apparatchiks the justification for heavy handed meddling in blogs and message boards, as well as on registered news sites.

As the circular says, "Please have the various localities purge all text, images, audio, and video that use this matter as a pretext to attack the party, the state, government departments, and related Internet policy..." And... "Also please purge all text, images, audio, and video – of support of Google, presenting flowers to Google, urging Google to stay, cheering on Google – that sing a tune in opposition to government policy." Even before these guidelines were leaked, Chinese media watchers, such as the EastSouthNorthWest blog, were already reporting that pro-Google comments were being scrubbed from Chinese discussion sites.

As China's relations with the U.S.A. and Europe deteriorate in the run-up to a bruising battle on China's RMB exchange rate, the PRC has been playing the propaganda and information control calliope with a superabundance of energy but a corresponding lack in subtlety. The sledgehammer approach is typified by the March 25 editorial in *People's Daily* overseas edition with the immortal title, "Google is not a God" (followed by the helpful clarification that "Google is not a virgin" either).

Any domestic gains, achieved by pushing domestic critics into a resentful silence by erasing their comments, charging them with engaging in anti-party/anti-government discourse, have been offset by the international public relations debacle that the leaking of the guidelines has caused. Also the attitude of cowed obedience which Chinese journalists are supposed to display has been further eroded.

With anti-Google anger a feeble rallying cry, the ever more rebellious Chinese media beginning to leak like a sieve, and U.S. opinion on the lookout for more reasons to jump on the PRC, the Chinese government will probably find it necessary to ratchet down the rhetoric, resist the temptation to disrupt Google's Hong Kong-based search engine host – and mollify China's prickly netizens with improvements to the Baidu search engine.

Baidu occupied the leading search engine share in China even before the Google spat, but it gets no love from sophisticated business and academic users for its incomplete, advertising-driven results. If China can divert a fraction of the manpower, abilities, and resources it devotes to monitoring and controlling the Internet into upgrading its domestic Internet products and performance, it will have a better chance of putting its Google troubles behind it.
**CP**

**Peter Lee** is a businessman who has spent 30 years observing, analyzing, and writing on Asian affairs. Lee can be reached at peterrlee-2000@yahoo.com.



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